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News From Congressman Joe Sestak

eNewsletter –September 2, 2009

Dear Constituents of the 7th District,

Our efforts both in Washington and here in the 7th District to overcome the economic challenges we face together continued throughout the past month and a half. As we rebuild our economy, we must recognize the urgency of addressing our healthcare crisis. If we do not, America will be spending one fifth of its GDP on health care by 2019. In Pennsylvania, from 2001-2007, health insurance premiums increased 86% while wages increased only 13%. All the while, more Americans became uninsured, increasing their risk of medical bankruptcy and lowering their quality of life.

I am proud to have worked to help shape and pass a landmark bill out of the Education and Labor Committee after I had gone to the Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor and Pensions specifically to work toward passage of comprehensive health care reform. Every American deserves access to affordable, quality health care and our future prosperity requires an economically viable system. A public health plan option that competes on a level playing field

with private companies is critical in this effort because it will offer the competition needed in the insurance industry to lower costs for everyone. I will work hard to see that we pass a final bill with this provision.

Even with the necessity of comprehensive reform, Americans across the political spectrum feel understandable anxiety about such a significant overhaul of something so important to everyone. I have a responsibility to reach out to my constituents and anyone else with questions and concerns to explain the facts of the legislation I am advocating. On August 1, the first day after our session in Congress ended, I had the pleasure of hosting an open forum as part of my Working Families Summit at Interboro High School, with a majority of the time focused on health care. Attendees expressed widely varying viewpoints about our health reform efforts and I appreciated the opportunity to explain my support for a bill that would: make coverage more affordable for individuals and small businesses, ensure affordable health coverage to millions of uninsured Americans and institute market reforms to make health insurance more competitive.

During these difficult times, that event also connected individuals with government agencies and private organizations who are working to help families. Issues addressed by expert panelists and organizations included health care, housing, student loans, employment, disability and legal aid

Following the Summit, I gladly accepted an invitation to a health care town hall at Broad Street Ministry in Philadelphia where more than 1,000 people came for a substantive discussion that lasted until almost midnight. I look forward to another event, and invite you to attend, specifically to address this issue on Friday September 4, 7:00 PM at Drexel Hill Baptist Church, 4400 State Road, Drexel Hill, PA 19026. In addition, I have scheduled three telephone-town halls, to be held on the tentative dates of September 13th, 14th, and 15th. Every registered phone number in the Seventh District will be called, allowing thousands to participate, including those who do not

have the time or ability to travel to a traditional town hall. I urge those interested to verify their phone numbers with my District Office.

Other highlights of the past month include the bipartisan passage of legislation to strengthen the FDA's authority to protect America's food supply, approving pay-as-you-go requirements to ensure new spending is offset and continuing to work for responsible transportation initiatives in the Philadelphia region. I also had the pleasure of honoring two outstanding individuals, Dr. Constantine Papadakis and Mr. Harry Kalas, for their contributions to Drexel University and the Philadelphia Phillies' respectively, and so many others who they touched.

Besides the legislation I have helped pass and the events in which I have participated, I believe it is important you know where I stand and for what I am advocating in regard to key national and international issues. In addition to taking part in my town hall meetings, I invite you to hear me discuss:

the real health care reform, with a strong public option, that I am working for every day;

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5D2mSCf7CuM>)

(http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fTIMLZp6_Og)

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CwILEVIBWEM>)

the importance of taking care of our Veterans, and not trying to scare them about the health care bill with false information for political reasons;

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=59odULyidKM>)

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MUNwtgx3lx4>)

setting benchmarks for success in Afghanistan;

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2AcudlGWqpg>)

and honoring the late Dr. Constatine Papadakis on the House floor.

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xyvU22l68E4>)

Congressman Joe Sestak is now on Twitter. You can receive updates on the Congressman's daily events as well as links to information about legislation, YouTube clips and photographs from around the District. Sign up at <http://www.twitter.com/JoeS>

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**For the most complete and up-to-date information on Congressman Sestak's work in Washington and in the 7th Congressional District, please visit <http://sestak.house.gov> . For help with a problem for which the Congressman can offer assistance, please call his District Office at 610-892-8623.*

Please do not respond to this email.

To send an email to Congressman Sestak, please

visit http://www.sestak.house.gov/IMA/issue_subscribe.shtml .

Addressing Health Care and Helping Working Families

Discussing Health Care and Providing Assistance to Working Families during Difficult Economic Times: To provide constituents with the proper information and tools to compete in the workforce and care for themselves and their families, I hosted my first Working Families Resources Summit at Interboro High School. Recognizing the increasing burden being placed on families across my District, the service fair portion of the summit was organized to network constituents with more than 50 government agencies and private organizations. More than 300 residents from across the region attended the event where government agencies at all levels were integrated with non-profit organizations to offer access to assistance with housing, student loans, employment, health care, disability aid and other existing support.

The event began with a forum, which included an opportunity for constituents to raise questions and concerns about the health care reform efforts in Congress. In voicing my support for real reform, I spoke about the fractured system we have today, which prevents many Americans from receiving the care they need; and our economy pays the price. Every individual's health insurance premiums are more than \$400 more expensive because of uncompensated care for the uninsured. More than \$100 billion dollars of productivity is lost every year just due to illness and premature death among the uninsured. The public health care option I worked to include in the bill passed by my Education and Labor Committee will produce needed competition in the insurance industry to drive down skyrocketing costs. We cannot stand another ten years of inaction. I am proud to support this historic effort to bring about affordable health care for all Americans, a goal that is not only morally right, but also economically sound.

http://www.sestak.house.gov/list/press/pa07_sestak/090801_WFS.shtml

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-TF2liSgO6g>

For more information on the health care legislation I helped pass out of the Education and Labor Committee, visit:

http://www.sestak.house.gov/list/press/pa07_sestak/090717_HealthReform.shtml

Upcoming Health Care Town Hall

Continuing to explain the facts about reform: At 7:00 PM on Friday September 4 at Drexel Hill Baptist Church, I will host a town hall to answer any questions regarding the reform efforts I am advocating in Congress. Please join me at 4400 State Road, Drexel Hill, PA 19026.

Enforcing Fiscal Discipline

Strengthening PAYGO rules that require Congress to offset the cost of new spending:

On July 22nd, I voted for the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2009. The bill strengthens the “pay-as-you-go” (PAYGO) rule that I voted for on my second day in Congress by making it public law-- rather than a House rule-- that Congress must find five and ten year offsets for all new legislation that reduces revenues or expands entitlement spending. To ensure compliance, the bill includes an enforcement mechanism that withholds spending for mandatory programs if Congress has not paid for the costs of all legislation enacted during the year. I voted for the bill because it is an essential first step toward stronger fiscal discipline, but I also believe that the bill should have gone further—applying PAYGO requirements on discretionary spending and not only mandatory spending. I intend to continue to work on implementing this necessary provision.

Ultimately, I voted for the bill because it strengthened PAYGO rules which I have supported since my first day in office to implement critically needed programs for American families, while ensuring our nation’s fiscal health.

http://www.sestak.house.gov/list/press/pa07_sestak/090722_PAYGO.shtml

Protecting America’s Food Supply

Meeting the needs of consumers and producers: I voted for H.R. 2749, the Food Safety Enhancement Act. The bill, which passed the House of Representatives with a bipartisan majority of 283 - 142, gives the Federal Drug Administration (FDA) more authority to recall tainted products, inspect facilities that process food supplies, and establish food safety guidelines for food processing facilities. The bill also includes numerous protections for farmers and smaller facilities to guarantee that the implementation of these new regulations will not jeopardize family farms, organic producers, or smaller processors.

Taking essential steps to protecting the health and safety of our nation, the legislation establishes the processes needed to secure our food supply and it does so while considering the needs of small business. We will prevent food-borne outbreaks, be better prepared to respond to them when they do occur, and protect public health.

http://www.sestak.house.gov/list/press/pa07_sestak/090730_foodsupply.shtml

Honoring the Phillies' Harry Kalas

Passing a resolution to acknowledge the life achievements of baseball announcer Harry Kalas: I helped pass a resolution that I introduced in April honoring celebrated sports announcer and Philadelphia icon Harry Kalas. A resident of the Seventh Congressional District, Kalas passed away on April 13, 2009 in the broadcast booth preparing to call a game between the Philadelphia Phillies and the Washington Nationals. I recently read a statement into the Congressional Record remembering Mr. Kalas' life and career. The resolution continues to pay tribute to Kalas' many accomplishments as a Veteran, father, son, husband and friend and passed by a 426-0 margin. Named the Pennsylvania Sportscaster of the year 18 times and inducted into the National Sportscasters and Sportswriters Association Hall of Fame, Kalas made his name known to the sports world. He will be forever remembered for his signature home run call 'it is outta here,' his contagious enthusiasm, and his incredible passion for the game of baseball.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EqjILfb4DH4>

Working for Responsible Regional Transportation

Ensuring Transparency and Accountability for Philadelphia Airport Projects: I remain committed to stopping the irresponsible planning at Philadelphia International Airport (PHL) that we have seen with the FAA's Airspace Redesign, which increases noise to unsafe levels in our communities, and its companion Capacity Enhancement Program, which expands the airport. As part of my efforts, I have requested a copy of the methodologies and underlying data of PHL's recently released Noise Exposure Maps (NEMs). After reviewing and comparing the 2001, 2008 and projected 2013 noise levels published in PHL's recent update, the comparison

revealed relatively minor changes—which is completely inconsistent with the major changes that Airspace Redesign, the Capacity Enhancement Program and the changed Class B Airspace have brought to PHL and the surrounding areas in recent years.

Extensive studies exist concerning noise, its measurement, its impact on public health, and its impact on the ability of humans to carry out cognitive tasks. In addition, accurate NEMs are necessary for land use planning and zoning by the communities neighboring PHL, and equally important for public health and safety. We must ensure that all affected are provided with the most accurate information and empowered to make informed decisions regarding their personal health and the safety of their community. More broadly, we must – instead of committing to projects like the airspace redesign that have little impact on the flight delays they are supposed to reduce – focus on efforts such as using regional airports and other infrastructure projects, including highway, rail and seaport improvements, which will provide jobs. That will result in a stronger economy and a more efficient transportation system for our region.

Traveling the District

Addressing topics of interest to constituents: I participated in numerous events throughout my District to provide as many constituents as possible with the opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback. These activities included participating in PECO Multicultural Series events, such as the Festival of India celebrating Indian culture and heritage. The events included native music and dance performances and vendors selling authentic cuisine. In addition, I met with a group of Girl Scouts from the Seventh Congressional District who recently earned their Gold Awards, the highest achievement a Girl Scout can attain; and visited with the

employees of the American Reading Company, a business in my district dedicated to making reading achievement for our youth possible through a partnership between the family and community.

I was privileged to address a number of groups, including the 14th Annual Golden Heart Group Banquet honoring “unsung heroes,” members of the community who exemplify courage by going above and beyond to serve others; the graduates of Moder Patshala (“Our School”), an institution that helps Bangladeshi children achieve academically through programs offering extra help with homework, study skills, and PSAT/SAT prep; and the 83

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Infantry Division Association, which held its 63

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Annual Reunion in my District. Brave men of that division – the Thunderbolts – fought and died for our country during World War II and I was honored by the invitation to be their keynote speaker.

Announcements

Veterans Benefits Guide Available:

The latest edition of the VA's Federal Benefits for Veterans, Dependents and Survivors has been released. The guide provides important updated information on changes in eligibility for VA medical care and benefits in addition to other federal benefits, including disability compensation, pension and life insurance. Major modifications include the addition of "Survivors" to the title and details on the Post-9/11 GI Bill signed into law in 2008. Visit http://www1.va.gov/opa/vadocs/current_benefits.asp for more information. Printed copies can be ordered from the Government Printing Office at \$5 a copy:
http://www.va.gov/ext_redirect.asp?url=http://bookstore.gpo.gov/actions/GetPublication.do?stocknumber=051-000-00236-9&type=1

<http://www.military.com/military-report/veterans-benefits-guide-available>

Student Loan Aid:

The U.S. Department of Education has organized a program to help those having trouble paying off their student loans. Income-based repayment (IBR) is designed to assist the repayment of student loans by spreading monthly payments over a period of twenty-five years – or ten, if choosing to work in public service – with each payment capped according to the individual's income. The program is designed to lessen debt-related stress for those with federal student loans. Only loans made to students qualify; loans made to parents or by private lenders do not qualify. Eligibility for entry into the program is based on income and loan size. For those making over \$16,000 a year, monthly payments would total less than ten percent of their income; those earning under \$16,000 would not be required to make any payments, as long as they remain under this cutoff. To apply for IBR, contact the loan lender directly. Visit www.ibrinfo.com for

more information on how to apply for IBR and to find out about eligibility.

Service Academy Nominations:

Last year, 16 students from the Seventh District were offered a tuition-free education at one of our nation's service academies (United States Military Academy, United States Naval Academy, United States Air Force Academy, and United States Merchant Marine Academy). In accordance with Title 10 Chapter 6954 of the United States Code Annotated, each Member of Congress may have a maximum of five cadets or midshipmen at each of the service academies at one time. For each vacancy, a Member of Congress can nominate up to ten candidates, and the number of vacancies fluctuates each year—it is a function of the number of men and women from this District currently enrolled at each academy. For example, in 2007, two Midshipmen were scheduled to graduate from Annapolis. That meant for the 2006 nomination and appointment cycle, the 7th Congressional District could nominate twenty candidates to compete for two appointments in the U.S. Naval Academy class of 2011.

For this year's high school seniors, the application deadline is October 16th. For more information, or to request a nomination package, please contact Chip Ridewood in the District Office at (610) 892-8623 or chip.ridewood@mail.house.gov.